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## **Re-evaluating work-based learning pedagogy**

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Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning

### **Abstract:**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to examine work-based learning (WBL) pedagogy within higher education (HE) related to the use of the 'field of study' concept.

#### **Design/methodology/approach**

This paper reviews WBL literature to discuss the original context of the concept and relates this to current pedagogic approaches through qualitative interviews and written explanations.

#### **Findings**

WBL pedagogy continues to use the concepts from field of study WBL but the study also indicates that academic practitioners are developing pedagogy to meet the needs of current workplace and educational policy.

#### **Research limitations/implications**

This paper is limited in its scope due to the small number of respondents but there are potential implications about emerging directions for this pedagogic range.

#### **Practical implications**

The paper argues that field of study WBL is still relevant to existing practice but further engagement and research surrounding WBL pedagogy is needed to examine this range of HE.

#### **Originality/value**

The added value is the evidence of evolving WBL pedagogy that can inform issues of flexibility within HE provision.

## **Re-evaluating work-based learning pedagogy**

### **Introduction**

In the context of re-evaluating WBL within HE, the guest editors of the Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning journal asked the question: "Is WBL a field of study in higher education? If so what constitutes this field of study?" (HESWBL, 2015, p. 2). This concept has been an important one for academic practitioners who have focused on university programmes that feature work-based learning (WBL), especially in the United Kingdom (UK). The purpose of this paper is to develop a greater understanding of the pedagogic principles for WBL using some of ideas developed for the 'field of study' and to gain a sense of how these ideas inform existing interpretations of WBL.

Having emerged from a more distinct set of pedagogic practices that linked higher education (HE) learning to the work role (Brennan and Little, 1996), WBL pedagogies and discourses have been prominent in worldwide educational debates about how to

facilitate professional learning within HE. There is an acknowledged range of practice within WBL that relates to programmes that exist within disciplines and those that operate outside of disciplinary frameworks. In the last ten years there have been many useful reports that 'unpack' WBL (Nixon et al., 2006). Newer variations of WBL, such as workforce development and apprenticeships, have policy driven economic imperatives that have repositioned the way in which universities engage with WBL. Consequently there have been calls for additional pedagogic rationale and theorisation (Lester and Costley, 2010).

The paper aims to discuss and demonstrate how past and present shifts in interpreting field of study WBL have implications for future WBL pedagogy and curriculum design. As a WBL academic practitioner who has studied existing pedagogies in WBL, my experience has been that WBL is very adaptive while recognising that field of study WBL concepts have been significant for many HE practitioners for a number of years. This paper engages with the question of how established concepts are influencing pedagogy using emerging evidence from WBL academic practitioners. Middlesex, as one of the institutions with a reputation for WBL, has presented a useful context to conceptualise current practice

The foundations of WBL within England have been connected to the lifelong learning policies of the UK and European Union that support individuals and organisations in their quest for continuing adult education. In Europe WBL is seen as a collective range that provides flexible HE provision, even while European models exist independent of the UK frameworks and are often linked to more traditional forms of HE (Devins, 2013).

As the concept of 'field' was introduced to differentiate this range of practice in the UK, academic practitioners sought to explain WBL to a wider HE audience. The notion of 'field' relates to Bourdieu's concept of "a structured system of social positions – occupied either by individuals or institutions – the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 85). To explore WBL pedagogy for this paper, earlier literature has been used to locate and define the rationale and meaning of field of study WBL. Building on this development, current literature and recently gathered data from Middlesex University staff has been used to re-evaluate how academic practitioners currently interpret WBL pedagogy in terms of the field of study concepts. It is understood that limitations of the paper include the inability to fully capture the meaning of earlier literature in its context, and the limited number of academic staff from which data was gathered.

### Mapping WBL pedagogy

The debate about what constituted WBL within HE has sometimes been difficult to evaluate, as literature has not been confined to one disciplinary area or one specific type of journal. In my doctoral research I noted the complexity of WBL and the possible confusion this brought to those looking at WBL literature to gain an understanding of the scope of practice (Nottingham, 2012). This work pointed out that a number of differing perspectives of WBL pedagogy were concurrently operating in the UK. The range of WBL includes approaches that are based within disciplines, such as health and engineering, as well as being more aligned to corporate roles within an organisation.

Brennan and Little (1996) reviewed a variety of work-related and work-based practice to analyse and map the innovations that had been happening in the UK. Innovative practice has influenced how practitioners talked about WBL referred to learning at and through work (Seagraves et al., 1996), but defining WBL has been problematic

as there have been various interpretations of WBL. In 2000 *Work Based Learning and the University: New Perspectives and Practices* (Seda Paper 109), Portwood presented the notion of work-based studies as a subject, independent of disciplinary structures, and Costley positioned WBL as a 'field of study' with evolving epistemologies. Seda Paper 109 was a public declaration of the legitimate use of the field of study work-based learning (WBL) pedagogy for higher education (HE). Prior to this publication, there had been growing interest in work-based studies in the academy. Boud and Solomon (2001) added the Australian and international voice to the debate into adult and vocational learning. As did Raelin (2008) from the United States who presented WBL in a more corporate workplace context.

Nixon et al.'s 2006 mapping of WBL *Work-based Learning: Illuminating the Higher Education Landscape Final Report* was commissioned by the Higher Education Academy and indicated a continued interest in WBL. This study was commissioned by the Higher Education Academy to focus "on learning which accredits or extends the workplace skills and abilities of employees. In effect, from an employers' perspective, we are talking about workforce development - the upskilling and reskilling of an organisation's employees" (Nixon et al., 2006, p. 5). The report highlights a shift that saw the government policy set to support large-scale projects focused on partnership with employers, thus re-framing the aspects of WBL debate. While Nixon et al.'s report did not mention field of study, it does mention the use of experiential and transdisciplinary practice (e.g. Mode 2 originally from Gibbons et al.) using Gray (2001) and other authors, but expresses doubts as the "validity of such an approach has yet to be fully accepted by higher education institutions and consequently work-based learning remains a contested area" (2006, p. 48). The Nixon et al. report highlighted the role of the part-time learner, a notion present in current provision planning and one embedded in the field of study framing of WBL.

### Exploring WBL pedagogy as a field of study

In this paper, three main articles have been used to represent the formation of WBL as a field of study: Gibbs and Costley (2006), Costley and Armsby (2007) and Gibbs and Garnett (2007). These three examples link to other publications and educational developments, and represent the compelling nature of the debate during this particular time period. All of the authors of these articles were based at Middlesex University at the time of publication (2006-2007). Middlesex, through its National Centre of Work-Based Learning Partnerships and WBL Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2005-2010) was well known for research and practice in this area.

The articles were written at a time when policy makers called for greater clarity between the various models and modes, as this was a large and growing area of practice within HE. During this period, academic practitioners sought to explain WBL by re-positioning it within HE. Not all WBL practitioners agreed with every tenet of the field of study concept or the pronounced use of transdisciplinarity, but the standing of WBL independent of disciplinary boundaries was now more firmly in the public domain and provided a way to identify this newer generic or transdisciplinary range of WBL within HE.

The first article being used to more fully define the concept of field of study is Gibbs and Costley's 'Work-Based Learning; Discipline, Field or Discursive Space or What?' (2006). The title illustrates the emergent quality of the discussion in educational practice and develops an argument based on the concept of WBL that had been developed at Middlesex University. It states that WBL has a "transdisciplinary set of awards that are not subject based" (2006, p. 341) and argued

that a new approach was required because this pedagogy and practice has a distinct educational philosophy. The authors also set out to claim WBL should be seen as field of study because it was an expectation of the academy that there be a "criteria for status" (2006, p. 342) and theorised practice using Bourdieu's concepts of intellectual and cultural capital as seen in HE, employment and politics.

The ideas espoused by WBL related to Portwood's 'learned worker' (2000) and a topology is introduced for discourses in HE that refers to Bourdieu's field theory approach, positioning the authors related to Becher and Trowler's academic tribes (2001) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice. The ideas of academic tribes and communities of practice were both influential ways to envisage and structure academic practice. The topology metaphor is described as a landscape within the field and where HE is "located in a social field, and its academic activities are controlled by fields of study, disciplines, specialisms, discursive spaces, and fields of enquiry" (2006, p. 342).

Gibbs and Costley make the point that academic fields are related to the exchange of intellectual capital and identified disciplinary communities and knowledge domains organised within institutions with reference to Neumann and Becher (2002). These fields create classifications based on "opposing forces, discourses, epistemologies of hard and soft science and epistemological characteristics and networks" (2006, p. 343). The point is made that the claims of disciplines need to be culturally distinct and work with the power system of the academic institution.

WBL is seen as a form of transdisciplinarity that had evolved in HE in the 'last ten years' (p. 345). It is described as being "within the paradigm of Lifelong Learning and is learner-centred and experience-led (Boud and Solomon, 2001)" (2006, p. 345). Barnett's 'supercomplexity' (2000) frames the argument that a new type of HE is needed that is responsive to the changing socio-economic setting within which HE operates. Besides describing WBL as a form of transdisciplinarity, the term 'generic' is also used; "WBL is concerned with the generic area of work and knowledge and the development of intellectual capital" (2006, p. 345) with parallels to Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault post-structuralism. The authors state that for Costley (2000) these ideas are used as a rationale for why those in education re-invent constructions about learning and knowledge.

Points about the nature of the WBL included many notions that promoted practical issues for learning in the workplace such as negotiated learning agreements with organisations and methodologies from within and outside of subject areas that linked to the suggestion that "the primary concern of WBL is with application rather than being theory-led" (2006, p. 345). Scott et al. (2004) provided an argument that WBL university awards created a relationship between academic and professional knowledge that included disciplinary knowledge, transdisciplinary knowledge and 'hybridity' (2006, p. 346).

Asking the question about where WBL can be located, the authors suggest students "live in two communities of practice" employment and HE (p. 347) but it was "problematic' if they were located within a discipline where the WBL is located outside of the HE field. This stance was mainly targeted toward more traditional 'practice-based' approaches in particular disciplines that had used WBL as a way to teach disciplinary subjects in the workplace, for example as 'sandwich courses'. "WBL as a field of study requires no methodological prescription sanctioned by a body of knowledge intent on retaining its power: its tools of inquiry are based on philosophical direction and practice; they are theory in practice bringing together

episteme and ontology in a different fluid blend that if captured a discipline would remove its essence" (2006, p. 348).

Based on Bourdieu and Passeron's contention that symbolic violence imposes symbolism and meaning "in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 104), Gibbs and Costley contend that adopting field of study WBL as an approach "challenges, in Bourdieu's terms, the symbolic violence of disciplines" (2006, p. 348). This claim validated the independence of WBL pedagogy within conventional HE provision. The authors used Robbins views on Bourdieu, who saw the field of education and the field of employment as competing and that the ascendancy of the need of the market meant that the university could not reproduce learning that is prior to or distinct from employment. It is argued that this means that WBL could either adopt curriculum and certification and/or competences into the curriculum, but as the field of employment creates impediments to knowledge creation, the authors' conclude it is better to keep WBL as field of study within education "where the epistemology of praxis dominates and where the development of the relationships of morality and knowledge leading to a better, fairer way of being can be nurtured" (2006, p. 349).

The second article 'Work-Based Learning Assessed as a Field or a Mode of Study', is by Costley and Armsby and was published in February 2007. The authors were both from Middlesex University and reported research done with other WBL practitioners as a part of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UK) Work-based Learning network. The paper sets out to look at four cases that identified the differences WBL for the Respondents of the workshop. These differences included the generic and transdisciplinary criteria met through practice, and the subject-based criteria where work-based assessment was facilitated as a 'mode' of delivery. As is explained in the article: "Generic criteria are used where WBL is constructed as a field of study, and subject discipline criteria are used where WBL is constructed as a mode of study" (2007, p. 21).

The article suggests that WBL assessment criteria can be seen differently dependent on whether WBL is seen as a field of study or a mode that is undertaken from a perspective of learning that is more conventional educational setting based on subject discipline understanding. According to Hager (2004) this way of learning distorts the understanding of learning for work. The authors make the argument that the field of study concept is more appropriate for people in work and refer to Boud (2001) to say that a curriculum of work has its roots in an epistemology of practice theorised by Beckett and Hager (2000) and Portwood's learned worker (2000). This paper also refers to the importance of aligning WBL with UK educational policies that presented the expectations that transferable skills were necessary for employment.

Data collection and responses reported in this article are based on work done with other WBL practitioners as a part of the UK Work-based Learning network where twelve experienced WBL tutors volunteered their points of view and four cases were developed from the responses that were used to develop concepts of WBL based on assessment. The subject area practitioners were in health, legal (law) and education. The authors make the point that in their view Case 1 and Case 4 from the workshops exemplified how WBL can be used as a mode of study or a field of study. Case 1 had existing subject-based curricula with graduate skills and work placements as a part of the curriculum. Case 4 assessment criteria emanated from practice and used Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC, 2003) work-related guidelines and was said to use of transdisciplinarity. Cases 2 and 3 have been described as being 'hybrid' because they featured WBL as both a mode and field.

The WBL approach was said to make a fundamental difference in the way the learning was assessed and that WBL as a field construes learning from work as the knowledge and understanding needed to be effective in doing work in particular roles in particular contexts. However WBL as a mode, using WBL as a style of delivery, still had much in common with WBL planned for a field of study context, and universities needed “to build in a respect for the experience, knowledge and wisdom work-based learners can bring to their programmes” (2007, p. 28).

The third article was published in October 2007 by Gibbs and Garnett and was entitled ‘Work-Based Learning as a Field of Study’. In this article the authors used “the analytical tool of Bourdieu’s practice” (2007, p. 409) for considering the field of study concept for WBL. In this context Mode 2 knowledge (e.g. Gibbons et al., 1994) and intellectual capital gives an organisational studies framework provided by Garnett that deliberates on the purpose of the university and organisations working in partnership with universities enhance knowledge through and for work rather than just at work (2007). Again WBL is seen directly linked to HE, focusing on “higher level critical thinking upon work (paid or unpaid)” (2007, p. 410) and highlighting the role of the external organisation in this partnership.

Social capital, the resources linked to a network, is used to consider how intellectual capital is produced from these interrelated social fields. Again the notion that WBL is either a new field of study or is an associated field is emphasised. The article points out that Bourdieu had sensed conflict between the fields of education and employment, so this article argues that HE needs to extend its “boundaries to recognize forms of intellectual capital it now find difficult (e.g. recognition by higher education of learning from experience) and logically include institutions of work as awarding bodies” (Gibbs and Garnett, 2007, p. 412). Within this argument, the field is an autonomous entity that generates values structure and logic, that reflect the economic and political power in the field, and here the marketisation of HE introduced the need to seek immediate value for fields in the workplace, and thus has changed what needs to happen.

The article goes on to conceptualise WBL field of study in terms of intellectual capital existing within the frame of reference of HE in terms of government rhetoric, a curriculum needs to be built around “knowing, acting and being” (2007, p. 414), and the differences between vocational awards and HE. WBL in the field of intellectual capital (Nikolou-Walker and Garnett, 2004) is seen as a mediating discourse where the field of study concept is prominent, and where partners are envisioned as “training providers, further education colleges, professional bodies, universities and employers” (2007, p. 417).

This article suggests that by carrying on the ideas that there is a distinction between academic and technical titles (also suggested by Bourdieu) that there are “unequal notions of cultural, social and economic capital being allocated to vocational learning compared to the more favoured professional and academic learning” (2007, p. 418). The field of study concept would help develop an integrated way to identify alliances within this emerging international field of study (Weisenberg and Peterson, 2004) to increase the diversity of HE provision and the value of partnership in the academy. A final point is that the authors “believe work-based learning has yet to fully establish itself as a field of study” (2007, p. 419) but the field of study approach offered a way forward.

The three pieces of literature framed the question ‘is WBL a field of study in HE?’ show a progression in terms of the philosophical development of the concept and the

empirical research that had been developed to understand existing practice. The first article 'Work-Based Learning; Discipline, Field or Discursive Space or What?' (Gibbs and Costley, 2006) sets the scene for the field of study concept. The second article 'Work-Based Learning Assessed as a Field or a Mode of Study' (Costley and Armsby, 2007) looked at more practical issues that were none-the-less related to location of the field of study outside of disciplinary boundaries. The third article 'Work-Based Learning as a Field of Study' (Gibbs and Garnett, 2007) made the case for intellectual autonomy within the academy.

The context for WBL within the UK during the period of the three articles was a time of expansion for WBL. The conceptual base of WBL in the UK was more widely associated with government policies like widening participation in the UK and lifelong learning policies worldwide (Walsh, 2014). The development of new types of HE seem also to be linked to initiatives like the introduction to associate degrees such as the UK's Foundation Degrees (Nottingham, 2012). Further government funded employability projects, embracing workforce development, championed WBL as a way to deliver HE more directly to corporate partners. More recently in the UK apprenticeships have become the driver for new curriculum development.

### Recent literature

In more recent literature from Middlesex University, the tradition of relating Middlesex practice as a "work-based learning field of study" (Bravenboer and Workman's, 2016, p. 145) has continued. Bravenboer and Workman's explanation of the WBL re-states the theme of defining and engaging with WBL in terms of transdisciplinarity while situating WBL by referencing disciplinary approaches.

Work-based learning is not a traditional academic subject discipline. This does not mean that, as a transdisciplinary field of study, work-based learning is in opposition to subject disciplines; indeed, they are often very relevant to it. It does mean, however, that that there may be important things that we can know, do and be that might not be best described from within a disciplinary perspective (2016, p.146).

Distinctive qualities of the transdisciplinary field of study are said to be the emphasis on a learner's own profession and WBL, the situatedness of the learning, and the development of transdisciplinary approach that support and promote innovation and enhancement in the work and practice (Bravenboer and Workman, 2016). There are however new variations and strands discussed that denote a wider application of the theory of field of study into new workforce related territories such as the inclusion of professional competence integrated within the work-based academic qualifications. The examples in the article explained as case studies represent the hybridity of WBL and its ability to create provision that is framed by the field conceptualisation while aligning the curriculum to more specialised knowledge. Some of these arguments could be said to differ from earlier framing of the curriculum and its view on 'sanctioned' knowledge (Gibbs and Costley, 2006) to take on a more pragmatic positioning for WBL provision.

### Responses from academic practitioners

Current academic practitioners who work at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University recognise the field of study concept as part of the philosophy of WBL at the university. As a part of a continuing conversation about field of study WBL and curriculum design at Middlesex University with other academic practitioners, I wanted to find out more about how earlier theorisation affected current



interpretations of WBL pedagogy. For example the views of current staff have continued to change as researchers new to the university bring their own views of pedagogy from previous institutions, literature, and life experience.

The process of gathering qualitative evidence was based on a social worldview that was interpretivistic with analysis that recognised both “literal” and “interpretive” readings (Mason, 2002, p. 149) to thematically present the data. University ethical permission was gained in order to interview staff involved in this area. Responses have been anonymised from four verbal interviews and one email exchange. I was able to use the four transcripts, an additional written response from a respondent, and the email response to evidence current practice. The two main questions were: ‘Do you use the ‘field of study’ concept in your work at Middlesex University?’ and ‘What is your overview of WBL pedagogy with or without this concept or model’?

All of the academic practitioners at the university were actively engaged in research and academic discourse to explore and articulate WBL pedagogy in terms of its contribution to knowledge. While the responses varied, it was clear that individuals valued explaining WBL.

The challenge of explaining WBL pedagogy to external and/or internal HE audiences was still evident.

I do use that term occasionally... to external parties... because what we do is radical... it's not mainstream in terms of HE....  
(Respondent D).

...that might be because of the perceived need to... ensure credibility for what we do... (Respondent D).

Respondents suggested that the earlier discussions about WBL pedagogy were developed during a political climate that was related to the radical nature of using knowledge outside of the university setting. Several respondents indicated there were still issues about how HE WBL pedagogy was perceived within mainstream university settings. The re-evaluation of WBL as HE pedagogy continued.

A standard way of engaging with Pedagogy within a broader academic and/or corporate context is to explain why WBL matters. Indeed, this is frequently the case with a lot of 'learning' areas & fields in both the University and the workplace, but it is almost exclusively... that the area of WBL requires justification for being part of a University's pedagogical tools (Respondent E).

...it's not just discipline, that much is clear, because it does not, is not, effectively a body of knowledge that produces an output. What it is, is a way of learning within a context which draws on a number of different disciplines to make almost meta disciplines?... it's part of a much broader aspect of human development in the work context... (Respondent C).

A number of respondents perceived earlier field of study WBL as a legacy from which their own pedagogic understanding was evolving because of the current needs of institutional programming and curriculum development.

We're at a stage now in the development of WBL... it's in some ways diversifying and in some ways consolidating. There is a

sense of confidence about what we do which is probably because it has got a legacy... but there's also I think a sense of, oh, we didn't realise that the boundaries are quite fluid... and we're beginning to notice connections that we didn't see before so that the field, if it's a field... it's a very dynamic field (Respondent A).

Respondent D accepted the main premise of WBL as a field of study had given legitimacy to WBL pedagogy within HE however there was still a need for re-examining the pedagogy:

I think it's really interesting what you're thinking about there, trying to redefine or reimagine or explain the field of study because we need to explore the field far more don't we? (Respondent D).

Some respondents did not necessarily use the field of study concept as it was either too specific to their current notion of WBL.

I don't consider it [own pedagogic research] in terms of the field of study. I am fully engaged with it as a rich pedagogy or andragogy... which... is as yet relatively undefined and needs to be further identified, particularly the relational aspects of the process (Respondent C).

Respondents linked WBL to a broad range of learning theory that included disciplinary knowledge.

I'm aware that there is a WBL or professional practice field of study and I'm also aware that its very much informed by adult literature on learning theories... and it seems to be informed by different disciplines (Respondent B).

Respondents speculated that WBL discourses were linked to societal changes and the policy context of HE. The notion of knowledge from the workplace was still an important factor in the pedagogy as was the aspect that the lifelong expectations of professional workplaces had changed.

The world of work is generating knowledge and validating it on its own terms, not on our terms (Respondent A).

We're now looking at, no longer are people trained by their organisations... to do their job.... we are expected to be responsible for our own development throughout our careers, and that we should be developing ourselves not for our current role but for the next role (Respondent C).

Several of the respondents noted that their own disciplinary expertise or workplace identities influenced their WBL pedagogy.

I think its incumbent on each of us as educators to decide how we then want to work with WBL. For example we should all be led by our own expertise. My background is in [discipline] and I like to use a [disciplinary] approach (Respondent B).

...my practice now is as an academic, but my practice before was in... fields of employment in other institutions or organisations with

very different purposes than education... but I don't think in a sense how I practice has changed a lot (Respondent A).

Finally it was strongly indicated that WBL pedagogy was primarily learner/student focused and it was an important area to develop within HE.

WBL is important enough in its own right... and it should be applied and it is being applied in enough disciplines as a way of really affecting higher levels of development of practitioners within the workplace, so that they are going to be innovative, fully developed as individuals... but in a holistic way (Respondent C).

### Discussion of WBL pedagogy

The interviews gave a sense of how academics were developing their own approaches to WBL based on an extensive understanding of the field. While the findings were from a small sample, they capture a sense of the continuing use of field of study WBL as the increased use of 'hybridity' as a way to envision pedagogy. The positioning taken has much in common with the previous literature in terms of championing working workplace learners and the concept of 'fairness'. Many felt that the introduction of field of study WBL had created a legacy underpinning practice and exemplified the need to theorise WBL pedagogy in ways that allow it to be distinct from other HE provision.

WBL pedagogy continues to adapt to meet the needs of the workplace and to provide partnerships within the university. Respondents indicated that educational policy supported greater pan-university collaboration. While not seen as a disciplinary subject, WBL was still seen as a framework rather than a mode or delivery style, recalling arguments by Costley and Armsby (2007). Not all of the respondents used the mode versus field distinction to define their individual pedagogic frameworks; in some cases the term professional learning was used but respondents acknowledged the continuity of field of study WBL as a term of reference.

In previous research I had explored the larger range of WBL pedagogic discourses using three main perspectives, the discipline-centred, the learner-centred and the employer-centred (Nottingham, 2012). I had aligned the field of study concept to the learner-centred perspective that supported individual HE learners even when they were located in larger cohorts. This learner-centred alignment is still central for current Middlesex academic practice. While I use the wider range of WBL pedagogies in planning curriculum, the field versus mode distinction informs assessment for transdisciplinary knowledge.

The relationship with organisations and partnerships has always played a part in the philosophy of field of study WBL, and is included in literature for this type of provision (Lester and Costley, 2010) but more recently the focus has been on large-scale developments that combine WBL with hybrid disciplinary components. Workforce development 'systems' (Hordern, 2014) are established and embedded in more university campuses, but developing pedagogy for these programmes is on-going and dependent on the partners' learning requirements.

Today, learning in the workplace is still a priority in educational policy, but as more WBL has been embedded in mainstream university courses, it is sometimes difficult to map the changes in pedagogy that have occurred. Government policy in the UK, as in many international HE contexts, represents sustained policy changes (BIS,

2009, 2011, 2015). Each institution has its own policies regarding WBL, and issues surrounding the WBL student can be a part of larger university issues. For example in the UK changes to HE provision, such as a rise in UK tuition fees, has meant that the number of entrants for part-time studies (undergraduate) has been affected (Callender, 2015). Part-time student issues often affects WBL as many of the programmes are offered as a part-time route. The re-introduction of higher apprenticeships in the UK has rekindled the vocational academic debate familiar to WBL academics.

HE is now associated to goals for wider social policy that supports provision for employability and skills. Flexibility is a dominant issue in current practice, and as Barnett suggests: "So far as its *dimensions* are concerned, flexibility may be present... in time, in space, in educational processes (pedagogies), in curricula, and in institutional and national systems" (2014, p. 18). Current WBL practice aligns with the idea of flexible pedagogies (Kettle, 2013) that are included in practice-based disciplinary knowledge, and encompass newer perspectives that include field of study WBL framing (Nottingham, 2016).

Costley has described WBL as coming from an approach of "independent study, which...drew upon a humanistic educational tradition" (2010, p. xv) linking WBL soundly to the HE traditions of learning that attempt to provide lifelong benefits. Lifelong Learning has been a centrepiece of European policy since the 1996 in Europe when "the policy of recurrent education had been replaced by the strategy of lifelong learning, defining the notion as 'a process of individual learning and development across the life-span, from cradle to grave - from learning in early childhood to learning in retirement'" (Szakos, 2014, p. 506). The development of lifelong learning for adults is a part of the European vision of lifelong learning for 2020 whose policies currently aim to "ensure flexible arrangements adapted to different training needs of adults, including in-company training and workplace-based learning" (Eur-lex, 2011, online). One of the biggest changes to work and education has been the increase of globalisation (Tomlinson, 2013) and the call for more internationalised provision has affected WBL planning and practice. Work-integrated practice in Australia has been more widely established, as has evidence-based studies in the United States, however in many cases discipline-centred WBL models still prevail.

## Conclusion

The paper set out to re-evaluate how the field of study WBL concept has influenced current WBL pedagogy. The review of the emergence of the ideas from earlier literature is a reminder of why the articles were written, to challenge the HE sector by legitimising WBL that operated outside specific disciplinary frameworks. WBL now plays a larger part in mainstream education, but WBL that operates outside of disciplinary structures may still not be fully understood or accepted. The paper argues for further research in WBL to explore the emerging directions for this pedagogic range. Research into the ideas that inform practice continues, e.g. transdisciplinarity within professional engagement (Gibbs, 2015), and newer areas of expertise, like coaching pedagogy, are now beginning to inform WBL.

This range of part-time WBL continues to provide solutions for Europe 2020, creating lifelong learning opportunities for adult learners within both undergraduate and postgraduate HE. In the current climate of HE, enabling WBL pedagogy could facilitate flexibility for institutions that need to diversify the learning and teaching for full-time, part-time, and distance students as well as those who require work placements and internships (Nottingham, 2016).

In this small study it was found that the legacy of field of study WBL concepts are still providing a way to explain and differentiate WBL. While holding true to some of the more radical tendencies for action within the HE sector in order to disrupt power within dominant fields (Gibbs and Costley, 2006; Gibbs and Garnett, 2007), current academic practice in WBL is increasingly engaging with hybridity to create new programming. It is also clear that WBL academic practitioners, like the ones at Middlesex University, are actively re-conceptualising pedagogy and beginning to articulate new directions for pedagogy and subsequent curriculum design. These developments should be useful within the academy to support sustainable university partnerships and lasting HE pedagogy that focuses on professional learning in the workplace.

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